

"Cities, as we know, have become congested, especially in low-income barrios which have traditionally served as ports of entry for rural-to-urban migrants. Barrios in California's major cities are overcrowded, dirty, and dangerous places suffering from gangs, violence, and drugs. Moreover, the restructured urban economy no longer offers jobs that hold great advantages over farm employment in terms of wages, benefits and stability. It is not that agricultural employment has improved a great deal, but rather that the quality of urban employment has deteriorated precipitously. In comparison, rural towns have become attractive, safe havens for immigrant families. As the proverbial revolving door slows, the immigrant population is beginning to amass in the state's agricultural environment."

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Palerm has organized a program to help such communities plan and implement activities that will improve the quality of life for their residents. Bringing together University researchers, cooperative extension specialists such as 4-H advisors, and local coalitions of parents, non-profit organizations, schools, and growers, the program, "Community-based Coalitions for Rural Development," will be piloted in three California farm-worker settlements. In preliminary studies, some of which were funded by UC MEXUS grants received by Palerm while at UC Santa Barbara, the University researchers have helped the local people to identify their most pressing needs. While the diverse interests represented by the local groups put forth a number of imperatives, some greatly conflicting, all were able to agree that improving opportunities for local young people was the highest priority. Together, programs were devised to expand services to local youth—including the establishment of an after-school learning center, complete with tutors, computers and modem access to the UC libraries; a recreation program, including field trips to museums and galleries; and in one community where new immigrants and long-time residents come into conflict, a series of community programs, fairs, and concerts to encourage appreciation of diversity and to promote tolerance. The University and the communities now are seeking funding to implement the youth programs, train local leaders to run them, and move them toward financial and administrative independence. Simultaneously, the University's

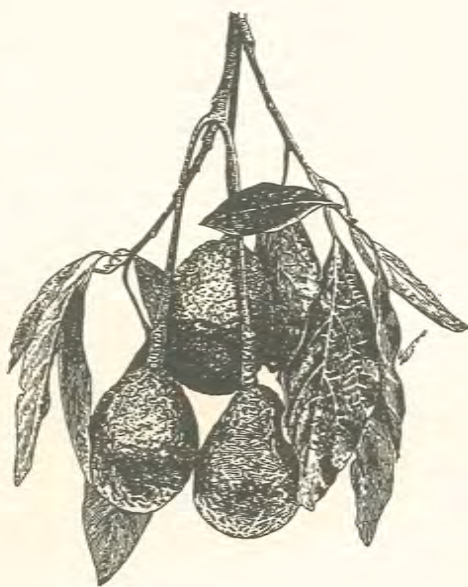
researchers will document the process, successes and failures of the coalition model in order to improve understanding of grass-roots community improvement efforts as they apply to farm-worker settlements. The researchers' long-term goal is to identify effective mechanisms for rural community development, training graduate students in these processes, and providing a basis for a statewide approach to issues affecting farm-worker settlements.

Indeed, the California experience is beginning to be replicated in agricultural hotspots across the nation, and, according to Palerm, it is urgent to devise successful methods for community-based redevelopment of the new or resettled rural communities. Such enclaves are filled with promise. Their residents are young, energetic, and hardworking. Their poverty stands in stark contrast to the incredible prosperity and advancement of the surrounding agricultural industries made possible by their labor. As high-input agriculture continues to expand, it will increasingly rely upon Mexican-origin workers, and rural enclaves will be transformed by their presence.

In response to the new reality, Palerm argues that U.S. poverty programs must be reconceived. "Conventionally," he says, "rural poverty is viewed as the immediate product of the inevitable agricultural decline which, combined with cyclical bouts of crisis, forces farms into a downward spiral from which they rarely rebound. The impoverishment of the rural population is, hence, caused by farm failures, diminishing farm income, vanishing farm jobs, high levels of underemployment and unemployment, and the absence of non-farm employment opportunities.

Programs designed to alleviate rural poverty include transitioning people out of agriculture, attracting non-farm employers into rural environments, and providing direct and indirect subsidies to boost farm income. That is, they all aim to compensate for the ill effects of a flawed and failing agricultural economy. In California's environment of agricultural prosperity, programs designed to alleviate the causes and effects of poverty in other parts of the country are ultimately useless."

As Palerm points out, the situation is far from hopeless, and alleviation of poverty in California's rural communities will not necessarily require a massive infusion of public funds. Many of the communities are in early, formative stages and have not developed an entrenched culture of poverty and welfare. They are populated by individuals with a strong work ethic, aspirations for improvement, and a desire for stable homes, families, and communities. In California, Palerm believes, there is a perfect opportunity for government, private enterprise, and community to work together so that rural settlements can enjoy some of the prosperity and good fortune of the industry they support.



Conservation of Baja California's Sierra San Pedro Mártir

By Richard A. Minnich and Ernesto Franco Vizcaino



In June 1996, a fire in northern Baja California's Sierra San Pedro Mártir consumed approximately 6,000 hectares (15,000 acres) of pine forest some 12-18 km. south of Mexico's National Astronomical Observatory. The fire was active for a week before it grew sufficiently in size for personnel at the Observatory to request help from Mexican State and Federal agencies. There followed one of the few attempts at fire fighting in the Sierra San Pedro Mártir. U.S.-style organized fire suppression has never been practiced in Mexico's forests.

Mexican firefighters were unable to control the fire's progress and began to consider assistance from U.S. agencies. Left with the decision for such an expensive proposition, the National Institute of Astronomy (the institution responsible for the Observatory) in Mexico City contacted us at UC Riverside and the Centro de Investigación Científica y Educación Superior de Ensenada (CICESE) because of our ongoing research on fire ecology in the Sierra San Pedro Mártir. Together with the Director of the National Institute of Astronomy, we reviewed the fire history in the area of the current burn.

We concluded that the present fire would be naturally contained within the boundaries of previous burns and that its most likely progression was east, away from the Observatory. Our recommendation was that the fire be allowed to run its natural course. U.S. fire-fighting support was not enlisted, and, as predicted, the fire died out without incident when it reached the Sierra's rugged eastern escarpment.

This small event in the fire history of the Sierra San Pedro Mártir highlights the potential role of Mexican and U.S. scientists in the design of conservation policies for the Sierra's long-term protection. Located approximately 80 miles southeast of Ensenada, the spectacular mountain range is home to the largest population of the peninsular race of desert-dwelling mountain sheep (*Ovis canadensis cremnobates*), an endemic rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss Nelsonii*), and a rare, endemic mountain cypress (*Cupressus montana*). The Sierra also forms part of the former range of the giant California condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*). Although the condor was locally exterminated a half-century ago, the area is under consideration as a site for the reintroduction of this endangered species.

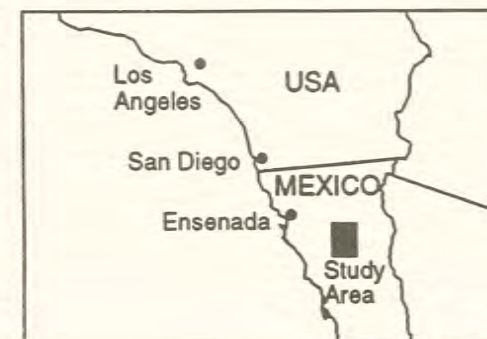
The Sierra San Pedro Mártir's mixed-conifer forests are unique to Mexico, representing its only diverse Mediterranean-climate woodland. Until the 1970s, the Sierra's isolation insulated the region from conventional fire-management practices. As a result, its open, park-like forests present a living reminder of "natural" 19th-century woodland environments in California and the U.S. southwest. The mountain range now provides a singular laboratory for comparative and experimental studies which inform fire management policies in Mexico, the United States, and other regions with similar forests.

However, rapid population growth in the region is challenging the Sierra's unique environment. While logging, recreational use, and changes in traditional cattle-grazing practices thus far have not led to wholesale environmental

destruction, conservationists and researchers familiar with the area have expressed concern that policies for future use need to be established before potential conflicts over land and resources arise. Determining appropriate policies must involve both local and national groups, however. A portion of the Sierra surrounding the Observatory has national park status, and indigenous Kiliwa and ranching settlements in the area depend upon the area's natural resources for their way of life.

Because human activities have been part of the Sierra's ecology for centuries, researchers caution that pressure to intensify or replace present forms of land use will disrupt long-standing interactions and jeopardize local economies. This circumstance makes the Sierra an ideal site for the establishment of a biosphere reserve under UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Program (MAB) and Mexico's national committee for this program (MAB-México). The biosphere reserve concept allows for the integration of human activities with conservation practices and strongly encourages the development of interdisciplinary research programs from which to guide protected area management. The Mexican model (*la modalidad mexicana*), in particular, calls for the incorporation of local people and institutions in conservation activities and, in turn, the application of research toward regional socio-economic concerns.

Initial studies in the Sierra San Pedro Mártir on vegetation dynamics, wildland fire, hydrology, soils, grazing, archaeology and cultural history have been completed by the authors and Michael G. Barbour from UC Davis, Joaquín Sosa Ramírez from CICESE, Julia Bendímez Patterson from Universidad Autónoma de Baja California-Mexicali, and Jack Burk from California State University at Fullerton with funding from UC MEXUS, the U.S.-



¹ Gonzalo Halffter. 1984. *Conservation, Development and Local Participation*. In: *Ecology in Practice, Vol. I*, F. Di Castri, F.W.G. Baker, and M. Hadley, eds., pp. 428-436. Paris, France: UNESCO

MAB program, the National Science Foundation, the Mexican Council on Science and Technology (CONACyT), and the UCR-Mexico Collaborative Research and Training Group. With the help of Yue Hong Chou from UCR, much of the database from this research has been incorporated into a geographic information system, making it possible to visualize many ecological and land-use relationships in the Sierra. For instance, vegetation and fire history mapped and interpreted from nine aerial photographic coverages taken from 1942 to 1991 demonstrated that high fire frequency gives the Sierra San Pedro Mártir chaparral its complex patch structure. The openness of the Sierra's mixed conifer forests likely results from intense surface fires that selectively eliminate both sapling and pole-sized trees at approximate 50-year intervals. An associated study indicated that cattle grazing in the forest had no measurable effect on shrubs and forbs, but did reduce herbaceous biomass in the extensive meadows.

The activities involved in the protection of the Sierra San Pedro Mártir as a biosphere reserve open up extraordinary possibilities for comparative and collaborative research between Mexican and U.S. institutions. Additional research would be required to provide the scientific basis from which to evaluate, nominate, and manage the protected area. Recognizing this, researchers from UC Riverside, CICESE, and Michigan State University joined together in 1995 to develop a collaborative and international research program to expand the knowledge base about the Sierra and complement public outreach activities which could lead to a biosphere reserve proposal.

To this end, in December, 1995 the research group convened a planning workshop at CICESE to address public and scientific concerns regarding the Sierra's potential protection as a biosphere reserve. A scientific advisory committee was established to assess the sustainability of present and proposed land-use activities, as well as provide scientific information on which to base a management plan for a biosphere reserve. Preliminary collaboration with the California Condor Recovery Team and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will evaluate the viability of the area for the reintroduction of the condor. An outreach/extension committee will serve as a liaison between the Sierra's local residents and the research group.

A biosphere reserve could exclude or limit certain forms of land use in the



ROBERT THORNE

Sierra de San Pedro Mártir, Baja California

Sierra San Pedro Mártir. However, a management plan need not preclude all commercial use of the area, and such decisions about allowable land use would need to be reached with the participation of the local landholders and residents. A biosphere reserve also may open up new economic opportunities compatible with conservation goals. Ecotourism, coordinated with an environmental education component for the biosphere reserve, presents a promising alternative for new commercial enterprises in the Sierra.

In the wake of the recent forest fire in the Sierra, a second public workshop is planned at CICESE for the spring of 1997 to provide basic information on the role of fire in the maintenance of the Sierra's unique environment and to develop recommendations for appropriate fire management. At present, our fundamental recommendation is to adopt a "let burn" policy that will maintain the current natural fire regimen of frequent but small and low-intensity fires that are contained by the boundaries of previous burns. We are convinced that aggressive fire suppression such as that practiced in southern California will lead to the buildup of fuel in the understory and, ultimately, to uncontrollable large conflagrations that could permanently damage the forest.

However, residents, landholders, scientists, and conservationists will need

to work together if the benefits of the Sierra resources are to remain in the hands of the local people and the Sierra's beauty is to remain an environmental resource for the Ensenada region. The long-term protection of the Sierra San Pedro Mártir—whether in terms of fire management, biodiversity conservation, or natural resource management—will require increased coordination and cooperation from all who claim a stake in the future of the magnificent mountain range.

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Latinos in California

Resources to support Latino research programs in the University of California have been specially designated by the Office of the President of the University on an annual basis since 1990. The allocation was made by the University in response to the recommendations of the "SCR-43 Report," *The Challenge: Latinos in a Changing California*, prepared in 1989 by a task force appointed, at the request of the California State Legislature, by then-President David P. Gardner. The task force called for greatly increased resources to support research in critical subjects, such as education, immigration, health, criminal justice, and community development, while working to build strong infrastructures at the campuses for local support of research and to train a new generation of scholars working in Latino topics.

Since 1990, Latino research funds totaling more than \$2.5 million have been allocated by the University of California. These resources have greatly intensified Latino research productivity in the system. On October 20 and 21, 1995, the University of California Committee on Latino Research con-

Understanding California's Latino population, especially in the context of the extraordinarily diverse society and economy California has become, is essential to the resolution of many challenges the State now faces. Californians must also understand that the realities of life for large segments of the Latino population of the State imply society's acceptance of standards which are inconsistent within our civilization, our ethics, our humanity and our hopes for the future. It is time for the State to acknowledge the needs and potential of its Latino population, for they are imperative to California's growth and advancement.

—from the Report of the SCR-43 Task Force, 1989: *The Challenge: Latinos in a Changing California*

Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly thereof concurring, That the Legislature of the State of California requests that the University of California initiate efforts in helping to coordinate the state's academic, professional, governmental, business, and community resources toward a comprehensive approach to these problems and their solutions, and that the university seek suitable research and graduate training funds commensurate with the university's major and diverse research mission and programs to aid in helping resolve crucial state problems.

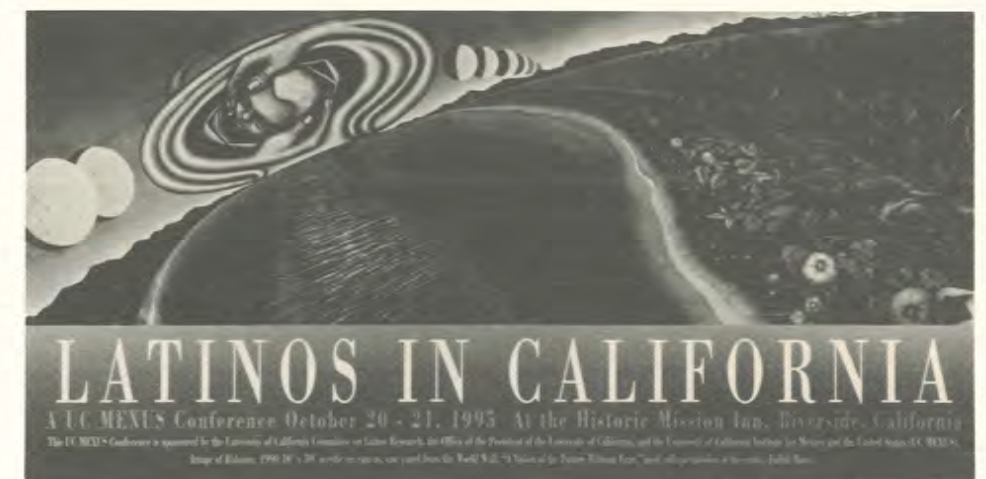
—from Senate Concurrent Resolution 43 (Presley et al., September 18, 1987)

vened the conference "Latinos In California," with the support of UC MEXUS, to highlight the research undertaken by University of California faculty and students as a result of funding allocations from the Committee. The conference brought together a diverse community of scholars, public policy makers, representatives of the media, and research-oriented foundations for the purpose of defining the state of Latino research and demonstrating continued support of a vigorous Latino research agenda in the University of California.

A complete inventory of activities sponsored by the University of California through the Committee on Latino Research is presented in the 100-page publication, *Latinos in California: Report of Activities* (1995) funded by the University of California Committee on Latino Research and available through UC MEXUS. Additional copies of the full color 39" x 20" conference poster featuring the work of Judith Baca may be ordered at a cost of \$13, shipping in the continental United States included. Quantities are limited. Make checks payable to Regents of University of California and mail to UC MEXUS.

Conference poster based on Judith F. Baca mural

MICHAEL CAPRIOTTI



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Redefining Poverty in California: Public Policy and the Mexican Rural Poor

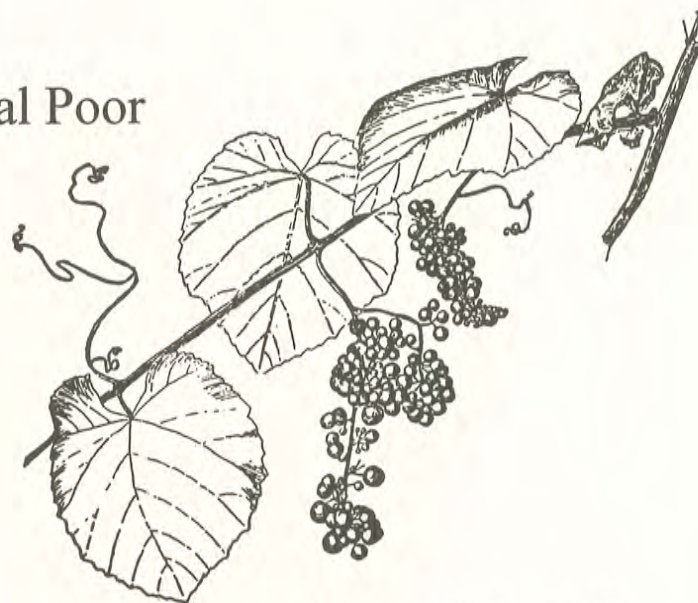
By Kathryn Vincent

By definition of the U.S. government, California's rural communities are free of poverty. Just look at the Census Bureau's records for 1960 to 1990. Using Census data, the U.S. Department of Agriculture identified counties with persistent poverty rates of 20% or more. In maps made from the data, entrenched poverty in nonmetropolitan areas of the United States is drawn starkly in black southern communities, in those of the Alaskan and northwest natives, in white Appalachia and in the Hispanic Southwest. But California's official poverty map is blank.

A casual drive off the California freeways to wind through the state's rich agricultural valleys contradicts the map's statistics by revealing towns and settlements thoroughly mired in poverty. Typically unseen and uncounted, California's rural poor, overwhelmingly of Mexican origin, are invisible both to their fellow Californians and to policymakers. For although California's rural communities are increasingly destitute, with deteriorating infrastructures and inhabitants struggling to survive, their populations are so small in relation to nearby metropolitan areas that they are statistically invisible.

This anomaly, according to **Juan-Vicente Palerm**, is only one reason why California's rural towns are unrepresented when public programs are implemented to identify or alleviate poverty. Palerm's research, begun at UC Santa Barbara and continuing from his new position at the University of California's Riverside campus, has followed the transformation of California's agricultural communities as they reflect massive changes in the state's enormously successful agricultural industry. Because the effects of these changes are more prevalent in California, Palerm believes, they are misunderstood in the context of the overall evolution of rural communities in the United States over the past twenty years.

California's rural poor are rendered invisible by a combination of bureaucratic process, ignorance, and apathy. Projects designed to collect information about rural poverty too frequently define "ruralness" and "poverty" on the basis of county data. In most regions of the United States, coun-



ties correspond to townships of relatively small size and homogenous population, economy and land use. But in the western United States a county may be larger than an entire eastern state, with a diverse population, geography, resources and economic base.

Thus in California a county which is largely dedicated to farmland and contains several rural agricultural communities may not be defined by the Census Bureau as

(See *Poverty*, page 4)

Inside

Academic Challenge (editorial)	2
Sierra San Pedro Mártir	7
Divided Waters (review)	22
Latinos in California	9
Border Briefing	10
Mexican Health	12
Announcements	17
1995-96 UC MEXUS Grants	13
New Publications	24
Net Notes	21